



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

News Release

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STATE WORK PROGRAM NAMED REGIONAL FINALIST FOR GOVERNMENT INNOVATION AWARDS

HONOLULU – The Supporting Employment Empowerment (SEE Hawai'i Work) program, an innovative service helping Hawai'i's businesses meet their growing labor demands and providing additional work opportunities for individuals on government financial assistance, was named a regional finalist in the Council on State Governments (CSG) Innovations Awards Program.

SEE Hawai'i Work, developed by the state Department of Human Services (DHS) and launched in February 2005, has to date placed more than 300 people in various company job training programs, where they can gain skills needed in the workplace. So far, about 70 of these people have graduated after 6 to 12 months of training from the SEE program and were hired by their companies. Statewide there are about 400 employers participating in SEE.

"We're ecstatic that SEE Hawai'i Work was chosen as one of the regional finalists in the CSG Innovations Awards," said DHS Director Lillian Koller. "It's gratifying to be recognized for creating something new and business-friendly that is not a typical government program. This program would not be possible without the partnership of participating businesses and organizations throughout the state."

Koller said one of the program's highlights was when NorthStar Alliance, a Honolulu-based mortgage banking and financial services company, hired 29 SEE workers as mortgage banking trainees. In less than a year, four of the former trainees are now earning from \$30,000 to \$35,000 annually in unsubsidized salaries. The remainder of the trainees are on their way to becoming mortgage banking professionals.

"SEE Hawai'i Work is transforming lives, helping welfare moms and dads break out of poverty and stay engaged in gainful employment," Koller said. "We're also helping companies find quality employees at a time when Hawai'i has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. That's a win-win situation for everyone."

Currently, SEE offers jobs ranging from loan officers to mechanics and computer specialists. The program provides pre-screened candidates to companies, who then train individuals to

meet their business needs. The employer sets the wage and the State reimburses \$6.75 per hour plus 14 percent of the wages. In addition, the State covers health insurance, childcare and automobile insurance, as well as transportation and housing assistance.

SEE is one of eight regional finalists in the CSG Innovations Awards Program. Established in 1986, the awards spotlight programs created by state governments to address public policy issues and thereby encourage other states to develop similar programs. Winners are judged according to newness, creativity, effectiveness, transferability and significance. The two top award-winning programs will be announced Aug. 12 in Breckenridge, Colorado.

For more information about SEE, go www.seehawaiiwork.org.

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